

Any safety issues raised by the Spill and the current remediation efforts, both independently and in interaction with other pollutants in the Creek.

The extent to which the current remediation efforts are sufficient, and any new technologies or approaches that could accelerate product recovery and/or improve the scope of the remediation.

I would like to express my thanks to Chairman YOUNG, Mr. OBERSTAR, Chairman LOBIONDO, and Mr. FILNER for their willingness to work with me on this very important yet often overlooked issue. The country will benefit from renewed Federal attention on this oil spill, the largest in the country.

Furthermore, I would like to thank my Democratic colleagues in the New York City delegation, all of whom signed a letter to conferees urging that this study be included in the conference report. I would especially like to commend Mrs. VELÁZQUEZ, who represents the people of Greenpoint. She and I have worked together closely on this initiative.

Additionally, I would like to thank both the Democratic and Republican staff of the Transportation Committee and the Subcommittee on the Coast Guard and Maritime Transportation. In particular, Ward McCarragher and John Cullather of Mr. OBERSTAR's staff and Fraser Verrusio and John Rayfield of Mr. YOUNG's staff were very helpful.

Mr. YOUNG of Alaska. I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Alaska (Mr. YOUNG) that the House suspend the rules and agree to the conference report on the bill, H.R. 889.

The question was taken.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. In the opinion of the Chair, two-thirds of those present have voted in the affirmative.

Mr. YOUNG of Alaska. Mr. Speaker, on that I demand the yeas and nays.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX and the Chair's prior announcement, further proceedings on this question will be postponed.

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

A message in writing from the President of the United States was communicated to the House by Mr. Sherman Williams, one of his secretaries.

VETERANS' COMPENSATION COST-OF-LIVING ADJUSTMENT ACT OF 2006

Mr. BUYER. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 4843) to increase, effective as of December 1, 2006, the rates of disability compensation for veterans with service-connected disabilities and the rates of dependency and indemnity compensation for survivors of certain service-connected disabled veterans, and for other purposes, as amended.

The Clerk read as follows:

H.R. 4843

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as "Veterans' Compensation Cost-of-Living Adjustment Act of 2006".

SEC. 2. INCREASE IN RATES OF DISABILITY COMPENSATION AND DEPENDENCY AND INDEMNITY COMPENSATION.

(a) RATE ADJUSTMENT.—The Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall, effective on December 1, 2006, increase the dollar amounts in effect for the payment of disability compensation and dependency and indemnity compensation by the Secretary, as specified in subsection (b).

(b) AMOUNTS TO BE INCREASED.—The dollar amounts to be increased pursuant to subsection (a) are the following:

(1) COMPENSATION.—Each of the dollar amounts in effect under section 1114 of title 38, United States Code.

(2) ADDITIONAL COMPENSATION FOR DEPENDENTS.—Each of the dollar amounts in effect under section 1115(1) of such title.

(3) CLOTHING ALLOWANCE.—The dollar amount in effect under section 1162 of such title.

(4) NEW DIC RATES.—The dollar amounts in effect under paragraphs (1) and (2) of section 1311(a) of such title.

(5) OLD DIC RATES.—Each of the dollar amounts in effect under section 1311(a)(3) of such title.

(6) ADDITIONAL DIC FOR SURVIVING SPOUSES WITH MINOR CHILDREN.—The dollar amounts in effect under section 1311(b) of such title and paragraph (1) of section 1311(f) of such title (as redesignated by subsection (e) of this section).

(7) ADDITIONAL DIC FOR DISABILITY.—The dollar amounts in effect under sections 1311(c) and 1311(d) of such title.

(8) DIC FOR DEPENDENT CHILDREN.—The dollar amounts in effect under sections 1313(a) and 1314 of such title.

(c) DETERMINATION OF INCREASE.—

(1) BASE FOR INCREASE.—The increase under subsection (a) shall be made in the dollar amounts specified in subsection (b) as in effect on November 30, 2006.

(2) PERCENTAGE OF INCREASE.—Except as provided in paragraph (3), each such amount shall be increased by the same percentage as the percentage by which benefit amounts payable under title II of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 401 et seq.) are increased effective December 1, 2006, as a result of a determination under section 215(i) of such Act (42 U.S.C. 415(i)).

(3) ROUNDING.—Each dollar amount increased pursuant to paragraph (2) shall, if not a whole dollar amount, be rounded down to the next lower whole dollar amount.

(d) SPECIAL RULE.—The Secretary may adjust administratively, consistent with the increases made under subsection (a), the rates of disability compensation payable to persons within the purview of section 10 of Public Law 85-857 (72 Stat. 1263) who are not in receipt of compensation payable pursuant to chapter 11 of title 38, United States Code.

(e) DESIGNATION CORRECTION.—Section 1311 of title 38, United States Code, is amended by redesignating the second subsection (e) (added by section 301(a) of the Veterans Benefits Improvement Act of 2004 (Public Law 108-454; 118 Stat. 3610)) as subsection (f).

SEC. 3. PUBLICATION OF ADJUSTED RATES.

At the same time as the matters specified in section 215(i)(2)(D) of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 415(i)(2)(D)) are required to be published by reason of a determination made under section 215(i) of such Act during fiscal year 2006, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall publish in the Federal Register the amounts specified in subsection (b) of section 2, as increased pursuant to that section.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from In-

diana (Mr. BUYER) and the gentleman from New Mexico (Mr. UDALL) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Indiana.

Mr. BUYER. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, H.R. 4843, as amended, is one of the more important bills the committee brings to the floor each year.

On April 6 of this year, the Subcommittee on Disability Assistance and Memorial Affairs, chaired by Mr. MILLER of Florida, took testimony on H.R. 4843. The subcommittee then marked this bill on June 8 and reported the bill favorably to the full committee by unanimous voice vote. The full committee reported the bill, as amended, on June 22.

H.R. 4843, as amended, would provide a cost-of-living adjustment, a COLA, to disabled veterans and certain survivors in the same amount given to Social Security recipients. All veterans who receive disability compensation and qualified survivors would receive the adjustment beginning December 1 of this year. Congress has acted on COLA legislation every fiscal year since 1976.

More than 2.6 million veterans receive service-connected disability compensation. These benefits are paid monthly and range from \$112 for a 10 percent disability to \$2,393 for a 100 percent disability. Additional monetary benefits are available for our most severely disabled veterans, as well as those with dependents.

Spouses of veterans who died on active duty or as a result of a service-connected disability may also be entitled to monetary compensation. The amount of the dependency and indemnity compensation is \$1,033.

Additional amounts are paid to survivors who are housebound or in need of aid and attendants or have minor children. Currently, about 340,000 surviving spouses and children are receiving survivors' benefits.

The amendment to the bill by Ms. BERKLEY would also provide a COLA to the dependency and indemnity compensation transitional benefit. Established in Public Law 108-454, transitional DIC is a 2-year benefit; and it is intended to ease the family's transition following the death of a service member or veteran.

The Congressional Budget Office is projecting a 2.2 percent COLA increase, but it may be higher or lower depending upon the changes in the Consumer Price Index. The exact percentage will be calculated as of September 30, 2006.

The cost of providing a COLA is assumed in the administration's budget baseline; therefore, it will be budget neutral. Additionally, H.R. 5385, the Military Quality of Life and Veterans Affairs and Related Agencies Appropriations Bill of 2007 fully funds a veterans' COLA effective December 1, 2006.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. UDALL of New Mexico. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.